

あゝ女神さまっ

45

藤島康介

KOSUKE FUJISHIMA

Oh My Goddess!



Oh My Goddess!

ああ女神さま

45



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DARK HORSE MANGA™



CHAPTER 283	
Hagal's Confession.....	3

CHAPTER 284	
The Destiny of a Demon World CEO.....	17

CHAPTER 285	
Kiss of Truth.....	52

CHAPTER 286	
The Interracial Romance Inquisition System.....	77

CHAPTER 287	
Judgment Gate.....	101

CHAPTER 288	
The Meaning of Trust.....	125

CHAPTER 289	
The Choice.....	149

betters to the Enchantress.....	174
---------------------------------	-----



Hagal's Confession











...LET'S
HEAR
THE
STORY.

NOW,
THEN...



WE
DO IT
BECAUSE
OF OUR
OBLIGATION
TO YOU.



I
DON'T
THINK
YOU'D
BETRAY
ME.



AND
EVEN
THOUGH
WE ARE
BOTH
DEMONS...

I DON'T
WANT TO
BOND
PATRONED-
ING...
BUT I AM
YOUR
PATRON.
NOT



...TO SHOW
YOU...
OUR
OUTER
LIGHT

IT
WAS
THE
ONLY
WAY...



...YOU
TO SEE
THAT
IDEAL
WORLD

WE
WANT-
ED...



OH...
REALLY?



...EACH
ARMED
WITH
SWORDS
BUT A
SINGLE
POWER

HE
HAD
EXISTED
ON THE
PRINCE
OF THE
DEMON
REALM...











IT'S
BACK OF
THE
NECK.



CHAMP



THEIR
WEAK
POINT...



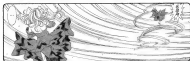
RIGHT?













BEING
ABLE TO
DO WHAT
ALL
OTHERS
CAN
DO...



THAT
RIGHT,
AREN'T
I..?

...IT
NOTHING
COMPARED
TO BEING
ABLE TO DO
SOMETHING
ONLY YOU
CAN DO.





I'LL
SHOW
YOU
GIRL...



...MY
IDEAL
WORLD
FOR ALL
DIAMONDS.





HEY??

THAT'S
AWKWARD
HILD TO YOU.



HEY??

YOU
WERE
ACTING
AS IF
HILD
WAS
GONNA...



YEAH,
BUT
WHY
ALL THE
AWKWARD??



RIGHT,
RIGHT.

AWKWARD
HILD?

AWKWARD

HEY

ST

SS

RE



SHE
WON'T
BE.



...MAYBE
GOING
TO BE
OLD
ANYMORE.

...AS
IF...
AWKWARD
HILD...





CHAPTER 284

The Destiny of a Demon World CEO





BUT IT SEEMS
THAT'S
THE WAY
IT'S
SUPPOSED
TO GO.

BEATS
ME.

SO
YOU'RE
GONNA
DO IT.



















FIND
A WAY
OUT OF
THEM...



...JUST
BLAST
AWAY
THOSE
STUPID
BLESSED



YOU'RE
THE CEO
OF THE
DEMON
REALM...





THAT'S
THE BEST
A JOE
CAN
DO!!



HOW
LAME!!



THAT'S
THE
BEST MY
FATHER
CAN--













"...BY WHICH CASE THE TENURE OF SAID CRO..."

"SUBJECTS FROM SAID CRO MAY REGAIN THEIR POSITION THROUGH RE-LEGISLATION..."

"...THE COUNTCOUNCIL OF SAID CRO'S TENURE SHALL BE SUSPENDED."

"OUR SECTION ONE SHOULD THE CRO'S POSITION BE GUARDED..."















OH MY GODDESS!

HILD



CHAPTER 285

Kiss of Truth







...IS WHAT?

THE SIDE OF TRUTH...

YEAH, WHAT?



...EVEN IF IT WERE TO BREAK THAT SPELL, YOU STILL WOULDN'T GET A CHANCE...



ACTUALLY...



THERE'S ONLY ONE WORD FOR IT...



...WHILE YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING...



...MORE TO THE POINT...



DIRT...?
TELL
YOU
COULD
EAT
THAT.



...YOU'VE
BEEN
OBEYING
HIS
LIFE.
THIS
VERY
DAY.



AFTER
ALL, IN
ORDER
TO
FULFILL
YOUR
CONTRACT...



















"I WANT A
GODDESS
LIKE
YOU TO
BE WITH
ME
ALWAYS"



BUT
YOU
KNOW...
YOU
MADE A
CONTRACT



...BECAUSE
OF
THEIR
FUNDA-
MENTALLY
DIFFERENT
NATURES

HEAVEN
SETS
LIMITS ON
INTER-
COURSE
BETWEEN
GODS AND
HUMANS...



IN ORDER
TO KEEP
THAT
CONTACT,
THE TWO
OF YOU
COULDN'T BE
ALLOWED TO
COMMUNICATE.



TO
KEEP
AWAY
ALL THOSE
LOSTING
THOUGHTS...

...THEY'VE
ADJUSTED
YOUR
MIND...

SO UP
UNTIL
NOW...























IT
SEEMS
YOU'VE
BEEN
RELEASED.

SO
NICE TO
SEE
YOU, PEE-
HILD...



HEY, HEY,
WHO
WOULDN'T
THOUGHT
YOU'D
DROP
IN...





YOU
DEATH
WORLD
FOLK
WOULD
SQUEEZE
MY
DATE
BO.

CHAPTER 286

The Interracial Romance Inquisition System



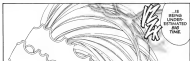














I'LL
REALLY
TAKE
OFFENSE!

IF
YOU'RE
SAYING
I'M SOME
KIND OF
CHEAP
DEMON
TRASH...



HA



I'M
JUST HERE
AS THE
INTER-
RACIAL
ROMANCE
INCUBATOR,
BUT...



THE KIND
OF PORN
WHO'D BE
WORN OVER
BY DEMON
TRASH
LIKE
THAT...?

OR
ARE YOU
SAYING
THAT
YOUR
ASSHOLE'S...

























CEO
OF THE
BODORR
COLLECTIVE...



...MY
EX-
DARLING'S
SECOND
WIFE.

AND
HEARD
THE
HUSKIES
MIGHT
CALL...



...WELL
DID
YOU
BREAK
UP?

IF YOU
DON'T
MIND
MY
ASKING
THEN...

...IT
WASN'T
ABOUT
STEALING
OR
BEING
STOLEN.

OF
COURSE
I DON'T
HOLD ANY
GRUDGES
OVER
THAT...





...THAT'S
JUST
WHAT
I CAME
HERE TO
DO.

OH,
YEP?
YEP.
THAT'S
RIGHT...

...THE
INTER-
RACIAL
ROMANCE
INDUSTRIAL
SYSTEM.

THE
RULES
THE GODS
DECIDED
DEMAND
THAT THEY
NOW
SUBMIT
TO...



Such is
a Key...
Such is
a Wall...

...KERO...

NOW'S
THE TIME TO
SHOW
US
WHAT YOU'RE
MADE
OF...

TING

Such is
a Door
a Path
the Light
and the
Darkness...



CHAPTER 287

Judgment Gate

...To End
the
Weaving
of this
Tragedy.

























...OR
WILL
YOU
ENTER?



WHAT
WILL YOU
DO?
WILL
YOU
REPAIR?



I'LL
ENTER.





















CHAPTER 288

The Meaning of Trust





GAZE...?

WHAA...?



...LONG
TIME
NO SEE,
YOU
KNOW?

MR.
REIKO
MORIKATO
AND
MISS
BELL-
DANDY...















GO
TO THE
LABORER
OF
ADAMANT









WHEE...
YOU
SAIT?









I
can't
see...
but...



Am
I
dying...

...Or
am I
dead?



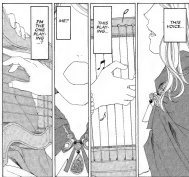
Am
I
falling
...?

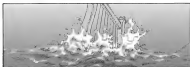
...Or
am I
rising?















IT'S
NOT ITS
FEEL
ARE

...I
GUESS
IT
CAN'T
BE
HELPED

OH,
WELL...



EVEN
THOUGH
THESE
FEEL-
INGS...

...FEEL
LIKE
MY
OWN...

...BUT
IT'S
NOT
MY
FEEL-
ING...

MY
SENSES
ARE
MORNING...

AND
IT'S
LIKE
I'M
SPEAKING
MY-
SELF...

WHAT
IS
THIS?

MAN,
I
WOULD
HARD
TO
BUY
THAT
INSTRUMENT...

BLUPP

BLUPP

BLUPP



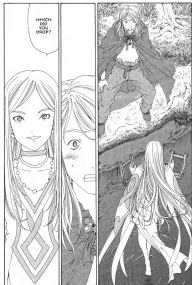
HUAY?



CHAPTER 289

The Choice





WHICH
DO
YOU
PREFER?













HELL
YEAH!

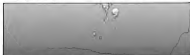


9/10/86



THEY'RE
PLANNING
TO KILL
ME!

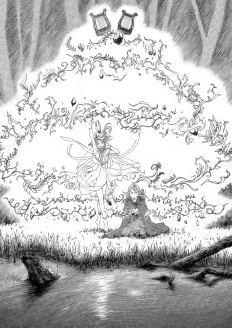
CLARENCE
THEY
WERE
A BIT
HEAVY















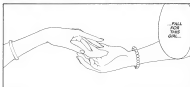


















BUT NO MATTER
WHAT I DID, I
COULDN'T
BREAK
OUT.

THANK
GOODNESS!
I HOPE
YOU WERE
ALSO
HERE,
KESOE...



OUT
WHERE
IS
THAT
PLACE
...?



...I
SYNCHRO-
NIZED
OUR
WAVE-
LENGTHS...

WHEN
SHE
USED
HER
SPELL...



WE
MAY BE
DRAWN
BACK
AGAIN
SOON.

...AND
WHEN THE
HANDS
TOUCHED,
I MANAGED
TO BREAK
THE
BOUND-
RIES.



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English-language version
produced by Dark Horse Comics

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Published by Dark Horse Manga
A division of Dark Horse Comics, Inc.
10790 SE Main Street
Milwaukie, OR 97122
DarkHorse.com

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toll-free at 1-888-266-4226

First edition: November 2013
ISBN 978-1-4365-0796-5

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Printed in the United States of America

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Welcome back! Just a note: on p. 49, Hild asks Belldandy, "You performed the kiss of truth, didn't you?" to which she turns away and makes no reply. You probably noticed that when Belldandy kissed Kaitchi in vol. 44, she referred to it as the "oath kiss" on p. 64 of that volume. These are different terms; "oath kiss" in Japanese is *chikai no kisu*, whereas "kiss of truth" is *shinjitsu no kisu*, but it seems they are different ways of describing the same kiss; on p. 77 of vol. 44, when Belldandy tells Kaitchi that it's a kiss of truth, she is using (in the original Japanese) the same *shinjitsu no kisu* that Hild does on p. 49 of this volume.

It's been seven months since *Oh My Goddess!* Vol. 44 was released, a delay due to the fact that we are now nearly caught up to the Japanese volumes. When we started releasing *OWG!* directly to graphic novel with vol. 21 in July of 2005 (as opposed to the way we had done it from 1994 to 2004, where we released individual chapters as monthly comic books and then later collected them to graphic novel), we were nine volumes behind Japan; in Japan,

Oh My Goddess! vol. 30 had come out in November 2004.

As you know, after that we continued to release new volumes every four months, which is approximately twice as fast as they came out in Japan, so even as new volumes continued to be released in Japan, the gap between their volumes and ours continued to close. For example, by the time we got to vol. 30 in August 2008, the Japanese edition was up to vol. 37, so the gap had closed to seven volumes. When we got to vol. 37 in February 2011, the Japanese edition was at vol. 41—the gap was of four volumes. When we got to vol. 41 in April 2012, vol. 44 had just come out in Japan—down to three.

And when Dark Horse released vol. 44 in April of this year, the book you are reading now, vol. 45, had come out in Japan just five months before (November 2012). At the time I write this, in July 2013, vol. 46 hasn't yet come out in Japan (although it is scheduled to do so in August). So, yeah, we're more or less caught up—hence the reason the books aren't coming out as fast now.

But you know *Oh My Goddess!* will go on being released in English, as long as Fujishima-san keeps releasing it in Japanese. Next year, in August of 2014, it will be the twentieth anniversary of *Oh*

My Goddess! is English from Dark Horse—and I know some of you have been reading it that long.

We have some returning letter writers this volume, both from the UK: first up, Brian Coussell, whom we last heard from in vol. 15 in 2010.

Dear Mr. Horn,

Andrew Floyd (vol. 44) is right in saying that computer users in general use a PC rather than a Mac, but for people who work in publishing, the reverse is true.

Steve Jobs insisted that the Mac come equipped with a suitable selection of fonts, and its suite of TrueType fonts, screen handling, color matching, and balance made the Mac, although expensive, the first choice in desktop publishing. The PC has been trying to catch up ever since in this function, but is still a decade or so behind, even when using software ported across from the Mac. When talking to Mac users, I find that they generally regard their machines as "a dependable tool," not a form of "one-upmanship," as Andrew seems to think.

Regardless of the source, the important thing is the end product—the next volume of *OWG!*

Yours sincerely,
Brian Coussell
(retired printer)

We publish so many kinds of comics here at Dark Horse—not only American and Japanese ones, but European comics as well. Just the other day I was working with Cary Groggini, our director of art and development, on restoring a page by Italian artist Milo Manara, originally published in the mid-nineties. It was nec-

essary to reletter in English a scene where a web page was being displayed in Netscape on a Mac of that period, and we realized Macs don't come with Chicago anyone, a font that used to represent the stereotypical Mac look. I was also amused by the idea the World Wide Web is now old enough that you might sometimes need to represent it in a retro way—and of course, that's true. A 1993 web page would look nothing like a 2013 one.

I should say that I don't want to encourage an endless flame war on this topic. ^_^ I do think that people who use Apple products professionally have a different perspective on them from people who use them primarily as consumers, and I think much of the "Apple zombie" image is related to the second kind of user.

I think that a lot of what people are criticizing isn't so much the quality of the Apple product itself, but their expense and the endless cycle of product launches with inescapable ad campaigns. That's understandable, when a company endeavors to become a ubiquitous cultural force. I remember when the "Think different" ad campaign began, back in 1997 in San Francisco. There was a huge billboard near the Bay Bridge (not too far from where *Viz Media's* offices were, actually) with the "Think different" slogan and a photo of Jim Henson. Someone sprayed a tag below it reading "PRODUCTS ARE NOT HEROES." And I bet you the person who did it was a Mac user themselves. ^_^

Next up, a fan letter heard from in vol. 41:

Hello again, guys. First off, can I just say, "Oh my goddess!" about vol. 44 (sorry, that was bad, but I've just read it and had

to write in and say that Fujishima did an amazing job with it). I just hope this isn't going to be the end of Kaichi and Belldandy . . . ?

Anyhow, what I was also writing about was to reply to Benjamin Schroeder's question in vol. 44 about a pinballish *Oh My Goddess!* game. In fact, there have been CMGI games in Japan. One was on the Dreamcast and PS2, and another one was done for the PC Engine. Video games based on older manga include *Chobits* and *Love Hina* (yep, there was a *Love Hina* game), both for the Game Boy Advance. Anyway, I just thought I'd let you guys know.

All the best,
Chris Cox
England, UK

P.S. Before I go, I'd just like to say to the editors at Dark Horse how nice you treat fans; it's like you're talking to an old friend—you really treat fans, like, well, fans, for lack of a better way of putting it. I believe that many other companies could learn from you guys.

I would just like to say that we did not pay Chris any money for that endorsement. ^_^ Part of the reason we encourage fans to write in and be a part of the manga is letter columns such as this is to symbolize the fact that, without the fans, there would be no manga series to keep going. But that's only part of the reason. It's not just about the fans in the abstract; it's about yourselves as individual people—who you are and why you chose to be here.

We received some fan art at the last minute from Vy Tran—thank you very much! I apologize that we don't have room

to run all your drawings, so I decided to use the ones of the goddess' angels, as they don't get enough attention. ^_^

There are a lot of things happening in the plot of vol. 45, so we thought it might be a good idea to include some notes. Belldandy's mother, Anous, is (like the demon Eilwaz or robot girl Sigell) named for an ancient Norse rune. "Anous" is described as also being the name of a god in Germanic paganism, as well as representing the letter *a*. I realize that "Belldandy" is a more whimsical rendering of "Vertlandi" (please see the notes on the goddesses' names in the back of vol. 2 for more information), but still, I like the idea of *a* coming before *h*. XD

Oh My Goddess! is a long series, and we do our best to catch it if a reference is made to something that happened a long time ago (although I feel inadequate when I think about the incredible job Maruta's translator, Mari Marimota, does in keeping up with all the ninja attacks and techniques!). We don't think the "Destiny Control System" mentioned by Anous in 111 has ever come up before. Indeed, it sounds like the opposite of the "System Force" that has influenced Belldandy and Kaichi since the very first chapter of *Oh My Goddess!*, as the System Force wants all its power to keep the two of them from separating. Of course, my first thought about the Destiny Control System is that the goddess sisters are named for (and are!) the Norns, who controlled the destiny of mortals. But if you look up 運命制御機構, the phrase used in the original manga that we translate as "Destiny Control System," it seems to be used in medical citations on neural stem cells, as in the mechanism that decides the fate of the cells. We can't say for sure if this is



where Fujikine got the term; Fujishinosensei has certainly used scientific concepts before in the plot of *Oh My Goddess!*, although it seems they're usually from physics and information sciences. Could he be getting off Shinow Mosamane on us? ^_^

In 112.4, as you might guess, the joke was reversed in the original manga; that is, first Anez warned Keiichi in Japanese and then repeated it in English, so in our version, she warns him first in English and then in Japanese. It's, of course, a slightly surreal moment, as the English dialogue in *Oh My Goddess!* is supposed to stand for the original Japanese conversation anyway, but when you consider the fact that Keiichi is a motorcycle mechanic currently having an adventure in Hell with his goddess girlfriend, I guess there's no point in singling out the joke for weirdness.

Maybe you already caught this one, but the beginning of chapter 289 is a play on "The Honest Woodman," part of Aesop's Fables. Originating in ancient Greece (although possibly influenced by other cultures), the fables became known around the world over the millennia, including in Japan, where they were introduced by Portuguese missionaries in the late sixteenth century. When Japan closed itself off to the world during the Tokugawa shogunate (1603-1868), many foreign books were suppressed, but the fables survived, having become accepted as a part of Japanese folklore. In the original Greek version of the story, a woodcutter drops his ax in the river, and weeps because without it, he can no longer earn his living. The god Hermes hears and takes pity on him, and dives into the river, to return with an ax made of gold. The god asks the woodcutter if it's the one he lost,

and the woodcutter answers no. The god then dives and brings up an ax made of silver, but the woodcutter again says it's not his. At last Hermes brings up the woodcutter's ordinary ax, which he accepts as his own. To reward his honesty, the god gives him the gold and silver axes as well. The Japanese version of the story is said to be a bit more nice, replacing the god with a goddess. ^_^

Beldandy's line in 171.3 reflects the ambiguity of the original Japanese, which could be taken to mean "their hands," "our hands," or both; therefore it's given in the English version as "the hands," without a clear possessive. It seems to suggest that Beldandy was within the goddess of the lake as Keiichi was within the god of the harp.

Just after *Oh My Goddess!* Vol. 44 went to the printer, Toros Smith, the person responsible for Dark Horse publishing this manga—and so many other manga, not only from Dark Horse, but from companies like Eclipse, Fantagraphics, Titan, and last Gasp—died in San Francisco at the age of fifty-two.

Toros and I did not have a good first encounter when I met him in the mid-eighties; in fact we rapidly got into some drama. I was fifteen years old then, and I don't think I had much in the way of manners (I'm still working on that ^_^), and Toros, who had already accomplished quite a bit and was working towards much more, didn't have time for my lanky whining.

One of the reasons I bring this up is that Toros had a reputation for not suffering fools gladly, as the expression goes. Yet he didn't write me off as a stupid kid, even though that's probably the way I came across. I don't know whether he just

forgot the incident or decided it wasn't important, but ten years later, when I was the same age that he had been back then, Toran was giving me support, and continued to do so for the rest of his life.

I'm not really sure what Toran saw in me. I didn't know him all that well. I certainly wasn't his equal in knowledge or accomplishment. As with many people who admired him, there was a lot we might have disagreed about.

Maybe this is a lesson I learned from Toran—there are people in this life that you could choose to argue with, or that you could choose to forget about arguing with, and instead choose to work together with as you can. You don't forget your differences; you just decide not to spend your time [remembering that our time here is limited] arguing about them. It's strange that this sounds so idealistic, when it's simply practical, a way to achieve things. Toran was a person of strong convictions, but he was not an ideologue, someone who demands others believe as he does, or else they're the enemy. He traded in accomplishments, not pronouncements.

At Toran's funeral, I talked about the letters you all have sent in over the years and decades, and what you've written about how much this manga has meant to you, about those of you who grew up with it, and those of you it brought together.

I felt odd, in a way. *Oh My Goddess!* was only one of many manga Toran licensed and adapted, and manga was only one of his many interests. He was also someone's husband, someone who was part of a family, someone with longtime friends. In other words, there had been so many aspects to Toran's life, and there I was, standing over his body, talking about *Letters to the Enchantress*.

And yet, I wasn't wrong to do so, because I—like the other people at the funeral—just wanted to speak about how Toran's life had changed the lives of others, how they had been reached and moved by the things he had done. If *Letters to the Enchantress* represents only one small part of Toran's influence, I consider how just how big that part has been, and how it has endured for almost twenty years now. There's much more I'd like to say about him, and you'll read more in the future.

Toran was—as we all are—many things. One of those things was that he was an otaku, and he was possibly the first non-Japanese person to know what that word meant. It may be true that he was in some ways, as many otaku are, a shy and private person. But his entire life as a fan was an act of communication, working to let people know what was cool and wonderful in anime and manga. He had faith in it, and he also had faith in you. That you are here together with the longest-running manga series in the English language is proof enough that he was right.

—CGH



STOP! This is the back of the book!

This manga collection is translated into English, but arranged in right-to-left reading format to maintain the artwork's visual orientation as originally drawn and published in Japan. If you've never read comics this way before, take a look at the diagram below to give yourself an idea of how to go about it. Basically, you'll be starting in the upper right-hand corner, and will read each word balloon and panel moving right to left. It may take a little getting used to, but you should get the hang of it very quickly. Have fun! If this is the millionth manga you've read this way, never mind. ^_^



Oh My Goddess!

ああ女神さま

45

OH MY GODDESS! IS BACK...

and so is Mistress Hild, who intends to get the truth out of Hagal about the reasons behind her coup. But the demon usurper isn't the only person who's been less than forthcoming about things, and now Belldandy and Keiichi must face judgment on their love... by a goddess who can claim seniority over all the sisters!

Winner of the thirty-third Kodansha Manga Award, *Oh My Goddess!* is the longest-running manga title in English!



Book 45